



REAL LIFE AS AN EN

It's Not Called a "Network"  
By Accident

# Who We Are & Why We Became an EN



- ◆ We're a Center for Independent Living
- ◆ Independence Includes Economic Self-Sufficiency
- ◆ Economic Self-Sufficiency Occurs Through Work
- ◆ We See This As Part of Our Mission
- ◆ We've Seen The Need for Reform



# How We Started Our Program

- ◆ Got \$200,000 Private Foundation Grant
- ◆ Matched It With Our Own Funds
- ◆ Set It Up As a Totally Separate Program
- ◆ Hired Staff Specifically for This Program
- ◆ Developed a Business Plan
- ◆ Use CIL as Infrastructure Support
- ◆ Built Upon Our Experience



# How We're Structured

- ◆ Director
- ◆ Employment Coordinator
- ◆ Employment Specialist
- ◆ Employment Technician
- ◆ Program Aide
- ◆ CIL Infrastructure



# What Hath We Wrought?

- ◆ 1,500 Screened, Interviewed, Counseled
- ◆ 300 Attended Orientation
- ◆ 260 One-on-Ones
- ◆ 215 IWP's
- ◆ 120 Current IWP's
- ◆ 70 Placements (Duplicated)
- ◆ 42 Working/26 Above SGA



# Who We've Served

- ◆ Those Who Want to Work Full Time
- ◆ Those With Marketable Skills
- ◆ Those Who Are Passionate About Working
- ◆ All Disability Types
- ◆ All Ethnicities
- ◆ All Ages
- ◆ Both Genders



# Who We Haven't Served

- ◆ Those Who Are Desperate
- ◆ Those Who Want to Preserve Cash Benefits
- ◆ Those Who Want to Work Part Time
- ◆ Those Who Want to Work at Home
- ◆ Those Who Want to Start a Business
- ◆ Those Who Answer That They Will Do Anything



# Who Is In Our Network?

- ◆ VR
- ◆ Staffing Agencies
- ◆ One-Stops
- ◆ Other Community-Based Organizations
- ◆ Other ENs
- ◆ SSA
- ◆ MAXIMUS
- ◆ BPAO Program





# Lots of Lessons Learned

- ◆ Need About \$500K & 2.5 Years to Break Even
- ◆ Must Operate Like a Staffing Agency
- ◆ Beneficiaries Have Lots of KSAs
- ◆ More Highly Skilled, Experienced Applicants are Harder to Place
- ◆ We Gave a Lot of Tickets Back



# Lots of Lessons Learned Cont'd

## ◆ Most Important Services Provided:

- Advocacy
- Peer Support
- Work Incentives Counseling
- Community Resource Coordination
- Assistance with SSA Work CDR
- Life Management, Not Just Jobs
- Support After Job Placement



# Pitfalls

- ◆ Existing Staff Are Probably Not the Right Ones for This Program – Business/Staffing/Marketing Skills are Critical
- ◆ A Business Plan Including Start-Up Funding Should Be Developed and Implemented 6 Months Before Tickets Are Released



# Pitfalls

- ◆ This Program Demands Collaboration:
  - SSA Field Office Staff Can Be a Barrier
  - VR May Feel Threatened
  - One-Stops Are Necessary But Probably Are Not Up to Speed on Disability Issues
  - Employers Aren't Interested in the Ticket or in Disability – They Want Good Applicants. Market to Them Accordingly.



# The Gorilla in the Living Room

- ◆ Earnings Reporting Will Kill This Program
  - Participants Have Short Memories
  - SSA Is WAAAAAY Behind on Work CDRs – You Will Wait a LOOOOONG Time for Payment
  - Earned Versus Paid/SSDI vs. SSI



# So What's The Good Stuff?

- ◆ Participants Are Interesting and Great to Work With When You See Them as Partners, Not as Clients
- ◆ The Back-End Earnings From This Program Have Lots of Potential
- ◆ Because You Provide the Up-Front Funding and Reimbursement is Based Upon Outcome, You have the Freedom to Do Whatever It Takes – No Barriers!



# More Good Stuff

- ◆ The Work Incentives Built Into TWWIIA Really Are Beneficial to Participants
- ◆ We've Never Had a Better Relationship With our State VR Agency
- ◆ SSA Is Truly, Genuinely, Honestly Committed to Changing Its Culture
- ◆ It's a Work In Progress